

The Story of the Namadaris

The Shimoga Circuit lies in the extreme west of the Mysore Province. Its area is some 4,000 square miles, of which considerably more than half is unculturable and waste. Upto 1900, the whole of the District was inaccessible by railway, and even now such communication extends only twelve miles into the interior. In the remote parts hundreds of villages are cut off by rivers, mountains and dense jungle from all contact with the outer world. There are some localities where the villagers never see a white man.

The Rev. John Shaw Banks was the pioneer Protestant missionary. He was stationed in Shimoga in 1863. Two years prior to the opening of the station, a missionary tour was undertaken from Bangalore, 170 miles distant. On that occasion, when the heralds of the Cross preached in the town of Shimoga, they met with a hostile reception and were pelted with stones. Forty years ago a tour was taken (this was written in 1910) in the South-west quarter of the Circuit and this is the earliest record of our work amongst the Namadaris. The Rev. A.J.O. Lyle visited these people in 1871, and reported that they found them rude and grossly ignorant. Nevertheless he advised that frequent visits should be paid to them on account of their friendly spirit. But, throughout the District, opposition and indifference were constantly encountered and progress was very slow. The field of work in the Shimoga Circuit has again and again been large, for, owing to the great difference in climate between the Shimoga District and the rest of the Mysore Province, Christians from other parts are afraid to settle in the Circuit. The consequence is that any increase can only be looked for in cases of indigenous conversion. For this our predecessors have longed and prayed and laboured, and the sight which would have so gladdened them has, humanly speaking, come within the range of vision. Just about the time when Mr. Lyle was touring for the first time among the Namadaris, a child was born in Mulavadi, a hillside village, some fifty miles from the town of Shimoga. The mother dies of sheer neglect when the boy was born, as three of every four women die in those parts. The child received the name of Giriappa on account of the hill that sheltered his village home. The boy, from his earliest years, proved himself to be of remarkable character. He seems to have ever been susceptible to influences for good. Contact with enlightened people roused in him a spirit of emulation. He coaxed his ignorant father into sending him to school, and the nearest educational institution was a Government school, Thirthahalli, thirteen miles away. The Namadaris are peculiarly attached to the place of their birth. This attachment is almost an instinct with them. Giriappa's move was, therefore, a remarkable

undertaking and proved that he was a lad of independent spirit. His experiences at school only tended to encourage his thirst for knowledge, so when his classmates told him that in Shimoga there was an English School, Giriappa's ambition was aroused and consequently, without consulting parent or relative, he started off on his memorable visit to Shimoga. His anxious father came in search of him and would have taken him back to his village home had it not been that the enthusiasm and earnestness of the boy and the assurances of a friend that he would take care of him proved too much for the father's arguments. Whilst in Shimoga it appears that the lad heard the Gospel preached in the public streets, but he told the that the message to impression on him then.

After a brief settlement in Shimoga Giriappa went back to his village, but he returned a changed man. Pity for his ignorant fellow caste-men was aroused, and he longed for their advancement. His superior education won for him a position of influence and some authority. This influence he never neglected to exert on behalf of his people. Giriappa made it his business to equip himself in all matters connected with social reform, and he welcomed with much eagerness a vernacular paper, then in its infancy, which dealt with such ideas as had most attraction for him. That paper was the *Vrittanta Patrike*, published by the Wesleyan Mission in Mysore. In the course of reading this publication. Giriappa's attention was drawn, not only to questions of social reform, but to matters of wider interest and more spiritual concern. Pondering these weightier matters, the usual conflict between a sense of duty and inclination took place. The struggle began seriously in when he attempted to introduce a social innovation into his own home. The attempt failed but the sense of failure provoked him, not leaving him till tow years later when another opportunity arose. This time he tried and triumphed. The flush of success immediately inspired him to further effort. He had come to see that his victory was due to the secret that the Christian held and the discovery prompted him to find out more concerning the Christian faith. This pursuit he carried on with some trepidation, for he was not sure of himself and he knew the pitiable ignorance of his clan. Accordingly, one evening in, when he happened to be in Shimoga on business, he heard that a Christian missionary was preaching in a schoolroom in the bazaar and seeing his opportunity longed to attend. A supernumerary evangelist was speaking when Giriappa entered. The enquiry's heart was strangely warmed as the heard the old man's testimony, and the Spirit of God from that moment possessed him. The preacher has dealt faithfully with the question of caste, and new thoughts; new hopes and aspirations took hold of the enquire's mind. He said nothing to the preacher, but returned to his village determined to do all in his power to infuse into his clan some of the desires that already possessed him.

Perhaps it would be well at this point to show these Namadaris are. Giriappa was a Namadari. They are a tribe of Sudra cultivators, numbering in all some 30,000 souls. They are a most exclusive people and one peculiar characteristic is that they, never migrated from the territory they have occupied. From a missionary point of view, this clinging to the place of their birth is a great gain. Any good work done on their behalf has a very far-reaching effect. They are a docile people who from time immemorial have lived in clearings in the jungle. They live in sympathy with spirit of the jungle and are susceptible to all that is beautiful. They are, for the most part, a highly respectable and self-respecting community. Their history is interesting. From many of their customs we might conclude that they are connected with the aboriginal tribes of the Mysore but no one would be more ready to dispute it than the Namadari himself. They prefer to give themselves the title of 'Nadava' which means the people of the country. They were feudal lords, and the feudatory system exists among them more or less relay. That their claim to be Nadavas is justified may be inferred from the fact that, in every chief town in the territory they occupy, the headman whose office is hereditary is invariably a Namadari. Even though there may be hundreds of Brahmans and other high-caste Hindus residing in the town, the Namadari invariably is there as the leading authority. Moreover, many of them possess inam lands which were granted to their ancestors by ancient rulers in acknowledge of services rendered to the State from time to time. At the period of the Muhammadan invasion, in the sixteenth century, this community occupied such a respectable position that they received the appellation of Namadaris, which means 'men of renown'. It is only right to say that this statement is disputed. All I can say is that this is how the Namadaris themselves account for the name.

Nothing is definitely known of the Namadaris prior to the eleventh century. We may presume that they were taught to recognize the authority of the Vedas whilst, being Sudras, they were denied the privilege of reading them, and they were instructed in the due worship and service of the Brahmans. One matter of great interest, from a missionary point of view, is the fact that this community has already been converted twice. In the eleventh century a brilliant dynasty rose in the Mysore and continued to rule for some 400 years. The centre of their authority appears to have been the Namadari country. The earlier kings were Jains and the community accepted the faith of their conquerors. Traces of Jainistic practice still survive here and there among the Namadaris. The new doctrine completely revolutionized their ideas, for they were now taught to deny the authority of the Vedas and the supremacy of the Brahmans. This condition lasted about a century, when Bitti Deva came to the Hoysala throne in A.D. 1104. Bitti Deva was both a successful warrior and a powerful ruler. His dominion extended over the Hassan and most of the Shimoga Districts.

At that time the Chola king who ruled over the Kolar, Mysore and Bangalore Districts and a part of the Madras Presidency was exercising his rule with much tyranny. Being an uncompromising Saivite he endeavoured to compel all his subjects to acknowledge Siva as supreme. The great Ramanuja was living in his territory at the time and the Chola king tried to win him over to the Saivite faith, Ramanuja in fear of his life fled for protection to the Hoysala kingdom and sought refuge under Bitti Deva. The great sage had not been long in the new country before he succeeded in inducing Bitti Deva to renounce Jainism in favour of Vaishnavism. Ramanuja gave him the name of Vishnuvardhana which means 'Propagator of the doctrine of Vishnu.' True to the significance of his new name, the king did all in his power to get his subjects to embrace the new faith and so it came about that the Namadaris in common with the rest became attached to Sri Vaishnavism. We need not stay to describe in detail the nature of the Change in their religious belief. All that need be said, since it changes their religious belief. All that need be said, since it affects our attitude towards this people, is that each of these conversions has brought them in faith and feeling nearer to Christianity. Professor Macdennel has declared that the faith these people now embrace in many respects closely relates to the teaching of Christ. We certainly find that the Namadaris are more susceptible to Christian influence and doctrine than the majority of caste Hindus. They are in spiritual matters not far from the kingdom of God.

Turning once more to Giriappa you will see that though the task he set before him was formidable it was not impossible. He had a community close at hand, exclusive, eager for its own development, already in sympathy with much that Christianity taught, and capable of appreciating much of its spirit. The clan admired him and had confidence in him. They appointed him the agent of a Guru who, in 1899, was in his minority. Let us see what Giriappa did in order to bring his people forward. We met him as an earnest enquirer in 1899. He purchased a Bible and several religious books and after – then he wrote to the missionary.

The state of the people in these jungles and their utter ignorance can only bring sorrow to your heart. Thought I have a mind to let you know many things my past sins come before me and stand as obstacles. I know that power to conquer sin can only come from prayer. I beg to you to help me from time to time in my spiritual life. I want Hutcheon's Theology Please send it to me together with some Readers and Catechism of the Life of Christ for my children. If you can secure a Christian lad who has had his education in a Mission school I shall be glad to let him live with me and give him a salary that he may teach my children.

He wrote again a few days later and said;

As I am a man of the jungle I do not understand several texts in the Bible. Hutcheon's Theology is a great help to me. If there are any other books which can throw light on the Bible I shall be most

glad to purchase them. It would be a good thing if you could station an evangelist at Thirthahalli.

During this time Giriappa was not only seeking after truth but he was making efforts to enlighten his people also. Through his instrumentality an assembly of leading Namadaris was convened and a manifesto of supreme importance was issued to all Namadaris living in the Thirthahalli, Nagar and Koppa Divisions. The following is a translation :

TO ALL NAMADARIS

The Koppa, Thirthahalli and Nagar Nadavas are to assemble one a year to discuss social matters and a Standing Committee on educational questions is to meet once a month. In each Division a local committee should be formed to discuss all caste matters and an annual General Meeting is to be held. Such a General Meeting was held in Arga in May last.

Following resolutions were agreed upon:

1. The sale of brides to be discontinued.
2. No tax on brides to be levied.
3. Widow marriage not to be prohibited.
4. Education to be encouraged.

In connection with this matter a fund has been established and all are requested to subscribe according to ability. Mr. Devangi Ramanna Gowda is appointed Treasurer of the fund. Collections are to be made to the headman of each locality. A hostel has been established at Tirthahalli for the benefit of students. The Secretary of this assembly will be the manager students. The Secretary of this assembly will be the manager of this hostel and the following gentlemen form the Committee:

Messrs. Devangi Ramanna Gowda, Ganappa Naik, Chennappa Gowda, Shekdar Thimmappa Gowda, Jamedar Timmappa and T. Siddappa Gowda. As such leading men have been appointed we hope the hostel will be a success. Any further information may be obtained from the President or Mr. Giriappa Gowda.

The Maharaja of Mysore saw this manifesto and expressed his warm approval. It is dated the 17th July, 1901. About this time Giriappa Gowda wrote another letter to the missionary in Shimoga, and it is worth quoting:

There are some 30,000 illiterate Namadaris here. All these have appointed me their leader and I think I ought to show them a way by which they may attain good character and education. Through your Mission we are prepared to go forward. Had it not been for Christian missions certainly India would have been ruined through the craftiness of the Brahmans. What you have been doing for mankind is a certain proof that your Lord some 2,000 years ago lived a life of holiness. Show mercy on these jungle people. Give us schools and the Gospel. You have come from distant

lands in order to preach to sinners, therefore show no partiality but come and help us. Rescue us from the net of the Brahmans.

Nothing more at that time, beyond keeping in touch with the enquirer, could be done. A year passed and then in August, 1902, Giriappa Gowda wrote an open letter to the *Vrittanta Patrike*. This is a translation :

It is well known that there are many philanthropic institutions in the Mysore Province. Are the expenses of these agencies met by Government or in any other way ? If by Government, are these institutions exclusively for the Brahmans ? Europeans are showing us great charity by giving us schools and preaching the Gospel. In this way the eyes of the ignorant are opened. Although there are people who try to put mud into these opened eyes, by God's power they have not succeeded. The Wesleyan Mission is working in many parts of the Province but it has not come to these remote jungle regions. Will not the Wesleyan Mission give us schools and preaching places ? do not we who are not Brahmans wish to walk in the right way ? Ah, Lord of Heaven, have mercy on us sinners. Through Thy disciples send Thy Gospel quickly to these parts. I have no strength to show my earnestness in petition or in prayer, for I am full of ignorance. Thy will be done.

This pathetic appeal we could not set aside. It was clear that God was calling us to undertake work among these people. So in October, 1902, an evangelist was sent to them in order that he might report. Giriappa, referring to the coming of the evangelist, said:

The message you have sent to us was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is indeed most convenient to send an evangelist to this place to find out the state of the people and to report to you. As I am the agent of a Guru whose jurisdiction extends over Koppa Nagar and Thirthahalli I will gladly take the evangelist with me as I go on tour and he will have a splendid opportunity of acquainting himself with the people. If he went alone he might not be so successful as the Brahmans would instigate our people to deal hardly with him and so spoil our work. I will therefore ask him to live in my house and take his food with me. In short, to be as a brother to me, for I am delighted to do God's work in his company. My friend, Mr. Devangi Ramanna Gowda, desires to have a Christian teacher in his village and will pay his salary.

That Giriappa meant to be true to his word is evidenced by the fact that, through his influence, the headman of an important village near his home wrote as follows:

I gratefully acknowledge the kindness you have shown to Mr. Giriappa Gowda on behalf of our people, in giving us education and religious training. I, together with my people, consider very favourable the proposals you have made to him. I trust you will not leave us long and hope that you will bring our community forward. As an infant cannot help its parents so the people in these parts, though numerous, are ignorant and therefore unable to help you. It is our duty to act according to your doctrine. If you only show us kindness there will be many schools here in a very short time and the Gospel tidings will spread.

The writer of this letter, with Giriappa, later traveled over 400 miles in order to attend our Evangelists Convention in Bangalore and the latter, though not taking baptism, publicly confessed Christ in a fellowship meeting held at the time.

On the morning of 10th November, 1902, after prayer, our work was definitely begun. The beginning was very humble. A small school was opened on the verandah of the enquirer's house and four boys came on the first day. Giriappa's gratitude was most touching. He wrote the following letter to the missionary in Shimoga:

FATHER IN THE LIGHT : Your child, Giriappa, who is in the darkness presents his compliments to you. We beg to express our gratitude to you for your kindness in taking pity on us by sending an evangelist to us to help us. What more can I say ? We are your children and the burden of bringing us into the Church of Christ falls upon you.

The numbers in the school rapidly increased and the evangelist reported that Giriappa was doing all in his power to secure its popularity. The children took a peculiar interest in the Scripture lessons.

I should like at this point to record an account of a tour which I took at the end of the year 1902. The object was to ascertain the position so as to be able to report to the annual Synod of the Wesleyan Mission in January and recommend, if necessary; that the evangelist should remain in Nalur to develop the work.

My cycle ride took me through most beautiful bamboo jungle but the rain was very heavy. A 34 mile run brought us to Tirthahalli which is a town of about 2,500 inhabitants. We took breakfast there and went on another ten miles in torrents of rain. Unfortunately the Travellers' Bungalow in Megaravalli was closed and we had to wait more than an hour before we were able to get inside. The next day was Sunday and we went on another two miles to see Giriappa and we help a Christian service in his house. The Christians were the evangelist, our tonga driver, my wife and I. The enquirer, with his son and father was present. Amongst those present was the Government doctor of Tirthahalli who was on tour. On Monday we again went to the enquirer's house. We found 30 children waiting for us. They has made much progress in Scripture knowledge. While my wife went to talk to the women, who are grossly ignorant, I conversed with several men, some of whom had walked distances varying from three to five miles in order to see the padre. The week before no less than 150 had come in. They had mistaken the date of our visit. We had a most encouraging conversation. The villagers pleaded for a permanent school and Giriappa promised land and Rs. 100 for the purpose. That same evening we showed our lantern pictures. About 80 persons were present, for the enquirer had invited several of his friends who lived at a distance and he provided food for them. The school children explained most of the pictures. Many of the people remained talking about our message untill past midnight. The next day a man came up and offered us the use of his house free of rent if we would sanction and evangelist in the village. He told us that his idea was to secure the presence of a Christian woman who would naturally influence the women of the village. We returned to Tirthahalli and the doctor who had been present at the lantern services in Megaravalli came to see me. I told him that I desired to arrange a similar service in the town and informed him that a sympathiser with Christianity had offered me the use of his house for that purpose. When the doctor heard that, he said 'Do not let it be in a private house. People will not come so readily. Let it be in our Anglo-vernacular school. I will get the necessary permission and I will go with you to all the town officials when you invite them. I will also see that the meeting is announced in the public streets. Of course, I agreed to this. We went to the Amaldar and invited him. During the afternoon it again rained very heavily and it only ceased ten minutes before the

service. Nevertheless the place was full. Thirty five years ago a missionary attempted to preach in the town and he had left the record that the meeting was rudely disturbed and that he met with the stoutest opposition.

You will not be surprised to learn that the Synod warmly supported the proposal to begin work in Nalur. Arrangements were made to station Mr. Gnanamitra, one of our best evangelists, in responsibility that we were obliged to withdraw our evangelist from Seringapatam in order to supply Tirthahalli.

I have already mentioned that Giriappa was the agent of a Guru who was in his minority. You will be interested, therefore, in hearing that amongst those attending the Nalur school was a Brahman boy who made such progress in his studies that Giriappa appointed him as private tutor to the young priest. Thus it came about that the little Guru was taught from our Mission reader to read and Gospels and a Catechism of the life of Christ.

Giriappa, true to his promise, went in and out among his people introducing our evangelist to them and doing all in his power to get them to open schools and to read the Bible. In this way his influence extended over an area equal to the whole of Success. He had made it his business to secure the sympathy of the wealthiest man in his caste and the approval and interest of another who was recognized amongst his own people to be a man of finest character; He was known in his own circle as 'The Jewel of the Caste'. The first mentioned is Mr. Devangi Ramanna Gowda and the second Chennappa Gowda. Both these men have been mentioned formed in 1901. These two had much authority in the caste and they play a very important part in the story of the movement. Devangi Ramanna Gowda was the first to suffer on account of his sympathy with us, and Chennappa was the first to renounce all of Christ and receive baptism in the name of the Lord Ramanna, according to his light, was a zealous follower of his own religion. He had been taught from infancy that reverence to and worship of the Brahmans was the whole duty of man. His father taught him by example and precept all the knew concerning the gods. When the old man died and Ramanna assumed responsibility he endeavoured to live as his father lived before him. At stated intervals he made pilgrimages to his ancestral shrine and layished gifts. When his vast fields were reaped the firstfruits were dedicated to the use of Brahmans. In order to mark his devotion he built a rest-house in his village and set it apart for the exclusive use of Brahmans. Nor was his homage the outcome of a servile mind. It was rather the outward expression of an inward conviction that this devotion was his homage the outcome of a servile mind. It was rather the outward expression of an inward conviction that this devotion was his duty and the holy Brahman's due. But after Giriappa had brought him the new teaching other ideas possessed him. Led by the Spirit of God he gathered the children of his village and sitting of God he gathered the children of his village and sitting of

God he gathered the children of his village and sitting in the shade of the Brahman rest-house, for none would have dared to enter, he taught them to read and write. There were many books he might have chosen for the purpose, but he used our Mission books and the first lesson and children read was the story of the life of Christ. I have a letter which I sent him about this time, and as it refers to a visit I paid to Devangi I will quote it. It is dated November, 1903:

I left Koppa for Devangi on 7th November. How beautiful and grand the scenery appeared to be. I walked through coffee plantation, over brooks, by the side of paddy fields and areca gardens, into shady lanes running through the densest jungle with here and there a break revealing ranges of rugged hills. Everything full of life and every prospect full of charm. Last February I paid a visit to Devangi and was astonished to find that the people were sufficiently in earnest to have made a start themselves. Six children were learning to read and Ramanna had provided the books-all of them Christian. I cannot tell you the joy I felt when I saw in this remote village, hitherto beyond all Christian influence, the Bible and our Catechism in use. The headman begged me to take charge of the school but there were financial difficulties. The enquire said he would feed and pay the master if I would give consent. What would you have said? I could but thank God and accept the offer. To my astonishment the Gowda put the money for a whole year's expense into the hands. I left Devangi very glad to hear. Eight months have passed and I am on my way to Devangi again. What has happened in the meantime? Ramanna has bought a Bible and a hymnbook; has not only succeeded in bringing the dozen boys he promised but has influenced 25 to come. Every child knows a morning and evening prayer and all can repeat the Lord's Prayer. Several children come from villages in the jungle, two and even three miles away. They can sing Christian lyrics now I found Ramanna waiting for my coming. He has been waiting for three hours. How gladly he welcomed me. Before we did anything else we asked for a quiet place where we might sing and pray. Ramanna gladly conducted us to convenient place. Where? Beyond under the prettily decorated arches and along the festooned path-up to the resthouse-not to the verandah alone but into the consecrated building itself where eight months before only Brahmans were allowed to go. Into this place we might enter and praise God for His goodness and pray for greater blessings yet to come. How gladly Ramanna gave us welcome. He sat with us-tried to ring our hymn-"Hail to the Lord's Anointed" head the reading concerning the 'other sheep' that Christ must also bring and knelt with us at prayer. He gave us food and money to carry on the work for another year. He joined us again at prayer in the evening and next morning being both to part said 'Goodbye' and, following us, continued with us for a mile until we were obliged to tear ourselves away from him. Think of all this in eight months in a remote village in a jungle.

Unfortunately, these encouraging experiences were soon to be disturbed by organized opposition on the part of Brahmans. The members of that caste were bent on closing the Mission school at Devangi. Finding argument and persuasion of no avail they determined to persecute the enquirer. They induced woman of a neighboring village to bring a case against Ramanna. He was accused of appropriation of her jewels and of treating her with violence. The Tirthahalli police inspector at first refused to take up the case. It was manifestly false. The amildar, whose judicial powers were limited, nevertheless heard the case and adjourned it several times. In the

interval the Brahmans approached Ramanna and told him that if he would only close the Mission school nothing further would he heard about the case. Ramanna remained obdurate. At length the amildar discovered what was obvious to everybody, that he had no powers to try the case, and Ramanna was brought into Shimoga and was heard in a higher court. The result was that Ramanna was acquitted, the court remarking in the judgement that the complainant appeared to have been instigated by some person or persons unknown. To mark his gratitude to the Wesleyan Mission for standing by him in his difficulties Ramanna handed over the resthouse to the Mission authorities for their sole use and possession. This weary trial dragged on from August, 1904, to November, 1905.

There was much to encourage us, however, in 1904. It was true that the Brahmans had succeeded in influencing Giriappa's father against us. So much so that the old man actually threatened to murder his son, or else put an end to his own life, if Giriappa continued to stand by us. It is also true that Giriappa had to contend against the ignorant bigotry of his own wife. He was aware of the fact that in Mysore territory a convert had no claim either to his property or his children, by in spite of all this some sympathized with him and he determined to go forward. The evangelist reported that some of the Namadaris were willing to send their sons to our Christian College in Mysore City, where they would eat, live and learn side by side with Christian boys. Even while Ramanna's case was pending, the new school building in Nalur was in process of erection. Giriappa had kept his promise and given the land and Rs. 100. He had also persuaded his friends to give another Rs. 50. That school building was opened in November, 1904. About 35 children were present and many Gowdas were also there. A hymn was sung, a passage of Scripture was read and then, after prayer, Giriappa made the following speech:

I thank the Chairman and this meeting for permission to address you on this happy occasion. I can never sufficiently thank the Wesleyan Mission authorities for the laudable work they are doing here. The Mission educates not only in secular by also in spiritual matter. As a hospital benefits the public so will this school benefit this village. Formerly we were suspicious of hospitals. What once we thought was poison has now become our milk. But a hospital only benefits the body. This school will benefit the souls of men and we hope that as the people advance they will learn to recognize the privilege of a Mission school. We may liken the people of these parts to the cotton plant. As cotton is sent to England and there prepared by machinery in order to being used in beautiful cloths, so in the same way one go to Mission schools and under the delicate processes of beautiful in character. I have done all in my power to the people, and especially the chiefs of my plan, towards Christianity. Many have received my message favourable. As an instance, I may mention Mr. Devangi Ramanna Gowda who has opened a school at his own expenses. My fellow countrymen - Listen to the advice of the missionaries. Let us fearlessly abandon all old practices and conform to new principles. Let us read the

Bible without hesitation. Let us be grateful to the missionaries. I have expressed my gratitude in the lyric which I have composed and which the children have just sung. I need say no more

As we shall here of the lyric again I will give a translation :

LET US SING OF THE BLESSED TEACHING
THAT ENLIGHTENS US CONCERNING
THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY GHOST.
LET US SING PRAISES THAT WE MAY NEVER FORGET.
O FATHER PROTECT US
LET US SING THE PRAISE OF THE WESLEYAN
MISSION THAT BROUGHT TO US
TO ABANDON OUR FAITH IN FOREST GODS AND DEMONS
LET US FORSAKE OUR GODS OF STONE
AND MUD AND LET US THINK
OF THE ONLY TRUE GOD
LET US GIVE UP OUR EVIL CUSTOMS AND ACCEPT
THE WILL OF THE ONLY GOD
LET US LIVE SO UPRIGHTLY THAT EVIL MEN
MAY BE LED INTO THE PATHS OF VIRTUE AND OF TRUTH

This lyric was set to a rousing tune by Giriappa himself and he made it his business to see that every Namadari child in a Mission school knew the lyric and its tune. He was aware of its far-reaching influence.

I have already referred to Chennappa Gowda. He lives some thirty miles from Nalur. The story of his wonderful stand for the new religion is worth recording. The evangelist reported that he was a most earnest enquirer and we kept in touch with him for a long time. I give an extract from a diary:

We left Shimoga on the 2nd of March, 1905, and reached Mandagadde that same evening. We had to leave the high road and enter four miles of jungle. The road was very rough. The tonga was damaged and the cart was upset. We reached visit to an enquirer there, Chennappa by name. He took a great interest in all we had to tell him. I also visited Kumara Gowda who lives about a furlong away. That same afternoon Giriappa came in from Nalur.

The day following, being Sunday, we held a service on the verandah of Chennappa's house and some twenty five Gowdas were present. It was arranged to have the evening service in the open air, but Kumara begged us so earnestly to hold the service in his house that we gladly acquiesced. Before that service, however, the evangelist told me that Chennappa was willing to be baptized. At 4 o' clock we went to his house and there, in to most impressive service. He, his wife and his young brother received the rite of baptism. Several of the Gowdas were person and they were much struck by the simplicity of the service. Some had told them that at Baptist the converts were required to drink blood. They were greatly relieved when they found that all Chennappa had to do was to take a vow of loyalty to Christ and the publicity renounce heathenism. They showed their joy by inviting him to take the evening meal with them. Chennappa reminded them that he was now a Christian and said he would be willing to forego the pleasure of dining with them if his presence would be obnoxious. This frankness pleased them much. They renewed the invitation and Chennappa went. The evening service was well attended. The next morning Chennappa joined us at prayers and then we went to Matigar would provide Rs. 120 a year. They consented to this and gave me Rs. 48 then and there.

This baptism was like putting oil on a flame. The Brahmans were incensed. They sent urgent letters to Mysore City and it was

agreed that the Sivaganga Guru should take an immediate tour in the Malnad and preach against the new religion. Their craft was in danger and no half measures would do. The Sivanganga Guru paid a visit to the supreme Guruin Sringeri, and took from him authority to receive renegades into caste. This circumstance is unique. It is a sort of Hindu authority to control a resurrection from the dead. Armed with this power, the Guru came to Mandagadde and sent for Chennappa. Chennappa refused to go and after waiting two whole days the Guru was obliged to come away. The missionary chanced to meet him on his way back. The contrast was striking. The priest with all the paraphernalia of his office-the elephant, silver palanquin, retinue the padre on his bicycle.

As all this failed, the Brahmans of the two nearest mutts gave Rs. 50 to a Muhammadan missionary and begged him to do his best to induce Chennappa to break from Christianity. Even the Roman Catholic priests in Tirthahalli though; it well to sent a *Controversial Catechism* to the new convert. Those who have seen the book will know how unscrupulous it is in its attack on the Protestant faith. Letters from friends and visits from relatives did not deter the convert from his decision to follow the Light of Conscience. He remains really true and steadfast today. He is a local preacher among his own people. God is richly blessing his glorious testimony. His patient and blameless life is the most convincing plea he can bring to his old castle friends.

Wherever news reached the Brahmans that the Namadaris were searching after truth, there some trouble was sure to arise. One man in another part was known to belong to the reform section. The Brahmans at once brought a false charge against him. His case was heard, but unfortunately it was followed by a conviction. He was sentenced to undergo a term of imprisonment, and he was so shocked at the disgrace that had fallen upon him that, while he was being conveyed from the dock to the prison cells, he dropped down dead.

But though the enemy raged the work did not suffer. The very opposition only seemed to make the Namadaris more determined. Just at the time when things were outwardly at their worst, Giriappa was instrumental in getting the headman of a village to take a very bold step fraught with wonderful possibilities. In the village referred to, a marriage was shortly to take place. Giriappa managed to induce the people to agree to effecting certain economies at the wedding, by foregoing some of the ceremonies. To a conservative clan like the Namadaris, this was a momentous step. When the saving, however, was effected the parties were anxious lest the rest of the village should think they were actuated by miserly motives. So he brought the money to the headman and asked him to use it for the public good. The headman accepted the money, which amounted to Rs. 50, and sent it on to me asking that the village might be supplied with Christian literature to that extent.

At the end of 1906, the evangelist sent me a report showing what principal developments had taken place since our work had begun. Several of the Namadaris had given up consulting astrologers and presenting gifts to Brahmans and had ceased fasting on Saturdays, this being a peculiar custom among the Ramanujas. They had learnt our Christian lyrics and had encouraged Christian literature. Intemperance was also the decline.

In 1907, a Bible Reading Guild was started. No one was allowed to be a member without first singing a paper, pledging the daily reading of God's Word and promising a prayer for divine help. A subscription was also required. Before the end of the year more than fifty had joined. The idea in establishing the Bible Reading Guild was a secure, as far as possible, the most promising Enquirer to our side. Whilst many had confidence in us as the only agency by those means the caste might attain social advancement, it was our purpose to lead the Namadaris to understand that the Mission stood for much more than social reforms. We looked to the members of the 'Gnanabhivridhi Sanga' (for this was the name of the Bible Reading Society-the words literally mean 'The Society for the Advancement of Knowledge') for practical sympathy with our work in the highest sense. The fifty who joined us were mostly men of influence.

In July, 1907, while the missionaries and evangelists were all attending a Convention in Tumkur, I received a letter from one of our best friends in Tirthahalli. It read as follows:

It is with deep regret and feelings of noutterable sorrow that I announce to you the much lamented and untimely death of Giriappa Gowda do the 20th inst. It needs not to say that he was a man noble minded and high-principled who chiefly aimed at the civilization of our community. That this was his end and aim is proved by the various reforms he introduced. His works, done with the generous, invaluable and divine help of your Mission, towards the spiritual and social improvement to our community, have inspired within us a felling of veneration towards him. They have, so to speak, gone even so far as to perpetuate his name. I feel this loss keenly, in as much as in him we have lost a man who knowing our malady was instruments in getting the precious remedy.

I was able to gather a few particulars about Giriappa's death. It appears that he was attacked by severe fever and was obliged to go into Tirthahalli for treatment. He grew worse, however, and Ranganna, his father, with the children, came in to see him. Old Ranganna was alarmed. He bent over the form of his dying son and said, 'Giriappa, you're dying.' Giriappa's lips moved. He bent again to catch the words-'Send for Lakshmi'. Lakshmi was his little daughter—a beautiful, bonny child playing outside the house. They called her and she came—all unmindful and unafraid of death. 'Sing the lyric' murmured Giriappa. No need to ask 'What lyric, father?' Even little Lakshmi knew which of all the lyrics she so sweetly sung was dearest most of all to him. There was one above all others. One that voiced

his own soul's longing. One that interpreted his cherished vision for his people. There, as the pure soul of Giriappa was passing from the transient to the eternal, little Lakshmi's sweet voice brought its own ineffable clam-

O FATHER PROTECT US, PROTECT US
LET US ACCEPT THE WILL OF THE ONLY TRUE GOD.
LET US SO LIVE THAT WICKED MEN MAY BE LED INTO
THE PATHS OF TRUTH. AMEN.

In life he had written 'The Saviour is calling. I belong to His fold,' and in death he could answer 'Amen.'

Old Ranganna was in terror now. with the superstition of the Hindu, he desired that his son should die in his own home, and hasty preparations were made. But Giriappa was speaking again and once more they bent to listen. they heard him whisper, 'Take me to Mr. Nightingale, the missionary in Shimoga'. 'All right', said Ranganna, but he was determined the more to take him back to his home in Nalur. Two carts were brought. Straw was put in them, an order was given to leave, and out upon the jungle road they went. Giriappa suddenly rushed himself. He looked out upon the familiar road, he saw that they were turned from Shimoga, and broken-hearted he cried, 'You are not taking me to the missionary, you are taking me away, then fell back upon the straw in death. On the jungle road the spirit of the earnest enquirer passed to the abode when the spirits of the just are perfected, where there is no enquirer but where all is known.

A few weeks later I went the way o Nalur once more. There was a spirit of heaviness everywhere. Strong men were bowed in grief. 'Giriappa is dead' was the cry I heard on every hand. 'He was the tiger of our caste'- this was the testimony on all sides. I met Giriappa's son, Shankarappa, now a little more than a boy. He said 'We burnt the body of my father. But I did not like to throw his ashes to the wind. May I show you what I have done?' I knew that the lad would have a horror of visiting the burning ground. but I knew he wished to show me what had happened. I put my hand in his, but he led me though the hand was trembling. We went together to the burning ground and when we stood I saw that he had brought some stones from the jungle and rudely enough, yet unmistakably enough, he had placed a Christian cross where the ashes of his devoted father had been laid. I have often thought to replace that simple cross by something more impressive, but better thoughts have always come to me. Let the spontaneous tribute of the lad stand there in its eloquent simplicity. It speaketh better things by far.

(Later - Written in 1992)

In Nalur a hostel for students stands today. Giriappa never saw the fulfillment of his wish, but the hostel has a foundation stone and on the stone it is recorded that the missionary in Shimoga has laid it in revered memory of Giriappa, the earnest, devoted servant of his own beloved clan.

Additional Notes on the Work among the Namadaris

The first record brings us up to the end 1909. I went home on furlough in 1908. Mt. Tomlinson was appointed to Shimoga for one year only, but in that brief time he succeeded in providing an excellent house in Mandagadde for the evangelist, and in securing a very desirable house and piece of land in Tirthahalli for our work there. In 1900-10 Mr. Brockbank was in charge. Unfortunately, a change was made at this time in the appointed of Indian Agency, both in Tirthahalli and Mandagadde. and men were sent who were not acquainted with the story of the beginnings of this work and it must be regretfully admitted that a loss of touch ensued. In 1901 I was back in India but was appointed to Bangalore (Kanarese) During my furlough I had received a petition from the Gowdas in the neighbourhood of Mandagadde asking for medical relief for their women and for a boarding school for girls. Nothing could be done in this direction until the Namadaris had been consulted and tested as to what they would do for themselves. The story of how matters developed in this direction may be gathered from a perusal of the papers left with Miss Campbell. In 1911, the work amongst the Namadaris was centered chiefly around Mandagadde. Miss Campbell offered to work as a nurse amongst the women there, and a big medical tour was undertaken early in 1912 to test the need. A long account of this tour has been preserved and the result of the work done justified us in attempting to do something definite in medicate.

I greatly hoped that a missionary might be appointed at Tirthahalli in connection with our 1913 Centenary Forward Movement. To ascertain whether a European could endure the monsoon rains in Tirthahalli. I went to Nalu during the whole of July and experienced 90 inches of rain. I stayed all the time in our mud-built school. I was convinced that Tirthahalli would be possible and the Synod approved of our asking for an extra missionary. The growing claims of other places and the loss of grip upon the Namadaris of the Tirthahalli side, which it must be most regretfully admitted was evident, led the Synod to regard the Tirthahalli appointed as not so urgent and, if it were not for repeated special pleadings on my part, the claim would have lapsed altogether. I can only hope that it will never be entirely lost sight of.

The most promising features of our work in the later years were-first, the growing number of Namadari boys in Hardwicke who read exceedingly well. But even this showed signs of lapse due to

- (a) Difficulty of food. The Namadaris had never taken ragi and disliked it immensely, and it was felt that in the interests of discipline preferential treatment ought not to be shown.
- (b) Insidious hostile influence brought to bear upon the Namadari boys by Brahmans in Mysore, and even by Fashman masters in Hardwicke itself and active opposition against the parent who sent them.

- (c) The transfer of Mr. Thorp from Hardwicke was a distinct set-back, for Mr. Thorp knew the Namadaris from personal experience in Tirthahalli and his influence was just the sort of power to help them in Hardwicke.
- (d) Increasing cost of maintenance in Hardwicke.

But with all this, one of the most encouraging experiences I met with in March, 1921, was in finding how lovingly and gratefully the Namadari boys who had left Hardwicke spoke of the school, and I felt that if we could get those past students together often we should do much to consolidate an uplifting influence amongst the clan. If I were back again in the Circuit, I should make this one of my most important duties.

The second promising feature is the hostel at Nalur. As the boys in our village schools made progress it became increasingly difficult to provide teachers of sufficient qualifications to deal with them. I could bring them up to the Third Class, but for the Fourth and Fifth I could not make adequate provision. I therefore tried to arrange that the most promising boys should be induced to go to Nalur, where I had provided a school of a higher standard, and I also introduced English. As this involved the problem of boarding the students, I determined upon a hostel in memory of Giriappa Gowda. It was my privilege in May last to lay the foundation stone of a hostel in Giriappa's name. The aim was to provide in Nalur an institution that should, in some measure, take the place of Hardwicke. Mr. Eddy visited Nalur last April and was most favourably impressed. The Mission House has given 100 and the Government has promised Rs. 2,000.00 so we farewell in completing the scheme.

The War made our work most difficult. It greatly hindered the building of the hospital in Mandagadde and necessitated my removal to Bangalor, thus providing for only a scant oversight of the work on the Tirthahalli side. Then, to our profound regret, our difficulties were immeasurably enhanced by the downfall of us much, but the removal of his striking personality and influence was a decided set-back and, although Wesley and Sundara have done excellent work, it cannot be said that the situation is as it was say, in 1907.

Giriappa's influence I have tried to make paramount on that side and I have insisted that his beautiful lyric, inspired as it was, I am assured, by the Spirit of God, should be sung every day in every Namadari school.

I have compiled a book in which a complete record has been made of every boy and girl who has passed through our schools. Every village from which they have come is shown, and the idea is to keep before the evangelists who work on that side the necessity of ever being in touch with past scholars, so that the fact that the Mission

The greatest elements of hope in connection with this work today are; the appointment of Miss Campbell o Manjagadde, and the Synod's determination to again station a man at Shimoga, and the probability that a lady doctor will soon be sent to the Hospital.

January 24, 1922

